# Three Arrows—or Six?

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"And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Strike the ground. And he struck three times, and stopped. And the man of God was angry with him, and said, You should have struck five or six times; then had you struck Syria till you had consumed it: whereas now you shall strike Syria only three times." 2 Kings 13:18,19.

IT is a very difficult task to show the meeting place of the purpose of God and the free agency of man. One thing is quite clear—we ought not to deny either of them, for they are both facts. It is a fact that God has purposed all things both great and little. Neither will anything happen but according to His eternal purpose and decree. It is also a sure and certain fact that, oftentimes, events hang upon the choice of men. Their will has a singular potency. In the case before us, the arrows are in the hands of the king of Israel and, according to whether he shall shoot once, twice, three times, or five or six times, so will the nation's history be affected. Now, how these two things can both be true, I cannot tell you. Neither, probably, after long debate, could the wisest men in Heaven tell you, not even with the assistance of cherubim and seraphim! If they could tell you, what would you know, and in what way would you be benefited if you could find out this secret? I believe that it would be as difficult to show that these two things do not agree, as it is to show how they can agree. They are two facts that run side by side, like parallel lines. Things are often left to the will of men, yet everything does come to pass, in the end, according to the will of God! Can you not believe them both? And is not the space between them a very convenient place to kneel in, adoring and worshipping Him whom you cannot understand? If you could understand your religion, it would be one that did not come from God—it would have been made by a man of limited capacity, like yourselves, who was, therefore, able to make what you can comprehend. But inasmuch as there are mysteries in your faith, to the top of which you cannot climb, be thankful that you need not climb them.

But sometimes a practical question about these two points does arise. It is correct to say, speaking after the manner of men, "If men are earnest, if men are believing, if men are prayerful, such and such a blessing will come." And that the blessing does not come may be rightly traced to the fact that they were not as prayerful and as believing as they ought to have been. I believe that God will save His own elect, and I also believe that if I do not preach the Gospel, the blood of men will be laid at my door. I believe that God will give to His Son to see the travail of His soul, but yet, if you who are His people are not earnest in seeking

the salvation of souls, and they perish, their blood will be required at your hands! This remark seems to be suggested by the story before us. God knew how many times the Syrians would be beaten and yet He left king Joash to decide whether they should be beaten three times or six times.

Next, reflect what great things may lie in a man's hands. There stood Joash, an unworthy king, and yet in his hands lay, measurably, the destiny of his people. If he will take those arrows and will shoot five or six times, their great enemy will be broken in pieces. If he will be dilatory and will only shoot three times, he will get only a measure of victory. And poor Israel will ultimately have to suffer, again, from this enemy, who has been only scratched, and not killed. You do not know, dear Friends, what responsibility lies upon you! You are the father of a family—what blessings may come to your household, or may be missed by your children—through your conduct! Dear Mother, you think yourself obscured, yet your child's future will depend upon your teaching, or non-teaching! Great events depend upon little matters, as large vessels hang upon small nails, and you who are here, tonight, sitting in the pews, and meditating upon your future course of action, may do that which shall lead many to Heaven. But if you decide another way, you may do that which will curse many through time and eternity. Remember that, and remember in what a position of responsibility you may

be placed many a time in your life—and how necessary it is that the Grace of God should be with you, to guide you, that you may not be an injury to others by what you do or leave undone.

Once more, notice what great results may come from very little acts. It was a very trifling thing, was it not, to shoot an arrow from a bow? Your child has done it many times in his holidays. He has taken his bow and shot his little homemade shaft into the air. This is what the king of Israel is required to do—to perform this very slight and common feat of archery—to shoot from an open window and to drive his arrows into the ground beneath. And yet upon the shooting of these arrows will hang victory or defeat for Israel. So there are some who think that hearing the Gospel is a little thing. Life, death, and Hell, and worlds unknown, may hang upon the preaching and hearing of a sermon! To hear attentively and not be disturbed in the sermon may seem a very insignificant thing and, yet, upon the catching of the Word of God may result either the attainment of faith or the absence of faith—and so the salvation that comes by faith! In our affairs that appear to be trifles, we are often shaking worlds. That which looks like a great action may turn out to be a puff-ball, and nothing more, but a little occasion may prove to be great in its consequences. The mother of mischief is no bigger than a gnat's egg and the beginning of Divine Grace is no larger than the mustard seed. Therefore, do not trifle with little things, for on these little things may hang the greatest things, even the great things of an eternal state!

That lesson seems to me to lie upon the very threshold of our subject, tonight. But I cannot detain you on the threshold. We must enter into the theme, itself.

I. First, let me speak of SOME MATTERS IN WHICH MANY MEN TOO SOON PAUSE. There are some who, having great opportunities—and we all have them, more or less—shoot only three times when they ought to shoot five or six times.

One of these matters is in the warfare with the evil within. Some, as soon as they begin their Christian life, fit an arrow to the string and shoot down big sins, such as swearing, or drunkenness, or open uncleanness. When they have shot these three times, they seem to think that the other enemies within them may be tolerated. My Brother, you should have shot five or six times! There remains a bad temper within you that must be conquered. Or there remains an unforgiving nature that must be slain. There is no going to Heaven with that evil thing alive. Or you are proud and self-confident. Have you not an arrow for that evil, for God hates pride, and so should you! But certain people say, "Well, you know, that is my constitution." Well then, you must be constituted differently, or else you will not get to Heaven. "Oh!" says one, "that is my besetting sin!" How often is that used as an excuse! If I were to go across Clapham Common, tonight, and a dozen men were to come around and knock me down and rob me, I should be beset by them! But when I stay at home and ask them into my house, and feast with them, and let them rob me, I cannot talk about being beset, for I have invited them there. Some professors tolerate themselves in sin. I repeat, they tolerate themselves in sin. One says, "Well, you see, I always was so hot-tempered." You must get cool, my Brother. Another says, "I was always very irritable." You must get rid of that irritableness, my dear Friend—the Grace of God should teach you to overcome that evil habit. We sin, but we must not tolerate any sin. It will ruin a man if he sits down and says, "I cannot overcome that sin." You MUST overcome it—every sin is to be overcome—and if you have struck three times and stopped, you must not rest satisfied. The man of God, tonight, will not give you any peace if that is your condition. But he will say to you, "You should have struck five or six times." There must be a clean sweep of every sin, for Christ has died, not to save us in our sins, but to save us from our sins.

There are some who shoot three times and then leave off with regard to Christian knowledge. They know the simple Truth of Justification by Faith, but they do not want to know much about Sanctification by the Spirit of God. Why not, my Brother? Can you be saved unless you are sanctified? Some are perfectly satisfied with laying, again, the first principles, always going over those—but they want to know no more. I beseech you, strive to be educated in the things of God! Read not only the first spelling book, "Believe and live," but go on to read in the high classics of holiness and communion. Seek to be well established in the faith and, "to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge." Be a diligent student

of the Word of God— give yourself wholly to it. Lie asoak in Divine Truth till it colors you through and through!

Some, again, sin in this way with regard to Christian attainments. They have little faith and they say, "Faith like a grain of mustard seed will save you." That is true. God forbid that I should discourage the little ones! But are you always to be a little one? A grain of mustard seed is not worth anything if it does not grow—it is meant to grow till it comes to

be a tree and birds lodge in its branches. Come, my dear Friend, if you have little faith, do not rest till you have great faith, till you have full assurance, till you have the full assurance of understanding! You love Christ, but why not love Him more? You have hope, but why not a clearer expectation? You have a little patience, but why not have abundance of Grace to endure affliction, and to glory in tribulations, also? "Oh, I cannot get to that!" Truly, the man of God is not angry, tonight, but he would be a little angry with you if he thought that you meant that utterance! You can get to it— you must get to it! You are not to be content without the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus, but you are to run and press forward, and not to be satisfied unless you daily make progress in the Divine life.

Others, again, seem satisfied with little usefulness. You brought a soul to Christ, did you? Oh, that you would long to bring another! Do you not remember what the General said, in the war, when one rode up to him and cried out, "We have taken a gun from the enemy"? "Take another," said the General. If you have brought one soul to Christ, it should make you hunger and thirst to bring another! You have been in the Sunday school. Keep to it—increase your class and rest not till all your girls and boys are saved! You preach, sometimes, in the villages. Preach twice as often—you will do that without knocking yourself out. Some dear friends have only enough Grace and enough usefulness to serve as specimens of what they ought to do. I have heard of one, who, going to Paris, walked into a restaurant and asked for a beef steak. They brought him a little something on a plate and he took it all up upon his fork at once, and said, "Yes, that is the kind of thing! Bring me some of that." Some people's usefulness just serves for a mouthful to a really earnest person. We say to such, "Yes, that is the right sort of thing! Bring us some of that." Why are you not doing much more? You have done more than some others, but why do you stop at the third shot? "You should have struck five or six times."

And this spirit comes out very vividly in prayer. You pray—otherwise you are not the living children of God at all—but oh, for more power in prayer! You have asked for a blessing—why not ask for a far greater one? We need more Christians of the type of the importunate widow. They have become very scarce nowadays. I should like to see that woman's successors, those who will not let the King go unless he blesses them—who lay hold upon the angel, as Jacob did, and wrestle all night until they got a blessing. You have done well to pray, but you should have prayed much more. What blessings are waiting, what

treasures are in the hands of God, ready for the man who can bend his knees and stay at the Mercy Seat till he wins his suit with God!

The Church of God, as a whole, is guilty here, as to her plans for God's Glory. She is doing much more, now, than she used to do, but even now, though she strikes three times, we may say to her, "You should have struck five or six times." Oh, that the Church of Christ had a boundless ambition to conquer the world for her Lord! Oh, that we never rested day or night till our neighbors knew the Savior, till sinners of every class were made to know that there is a God in Israel! Start up you, you who have done so little, Churches that have been satisfied with now and then stirring the Baptismal Pool, and the adding of half-a-dozen in a year! Oh, for cries to God, and labors for God of a very different sort from those of the past! My time would fail me if I dwelt on this point. You will all think of many matters in which we begin well and then we stop.

II. But now, secondly, let me speak of THE REASONS FOR THIS PAUSING. Why do men come to a dead halt so soon?

Some of them say that they are afraid of being presumptuous. You are afraid of being too holy, are you? Dismiss your fear! You are afraid of asking for too much Grace? Be afraid of having too little! You are afraid of conquering sin— tremble for fear of an unconquered sin! There is no presumption in taking the largest promise of God and pleading it, and expecting to have it fulfilled.

Perhaps one says, "/have not the natural ability to be doing more, or enjoying more." What has natural ability to do with it? When all your natural abilities are in the grave and you look only to the spiritual strength of God, then you shall see greater things than these! Talk not so, I pray you. Another says, "Well, I am getting old, I cannot shoot as I used to do." Well, dear Friend, if you want to get old, the surest way is to get old. I mean it. Think that you cannot do what you used to do and give up your religious engagements because you are getting so old? Give up preaching because you are so old? Give up the Sunday school because you are so old and you will be old fast enough—that is the sure way to make yourself old! Look at our statesmen and notice to what an age they still continue working. One reason is because they work on—if they gave up, they would have to give up! If we will but persevere, we shall prove that there is life in the old dogs, yet. We can do something, yet, in the cause of God, even though the hair turns gray and the voice gets weak!

Let us not make an excuse out of our age until it really does prevent us from doing our work for Him—then we must take to something else that we can do to serve the Lord, and so bring forth fruit even in old age.

Shall I tell you the real reasons why men pause in their work? With some, it is because they are too dependent upon their fellow men. This king Joash could shoot when Elisha put his hand on his hand—probably Elisha only did that once, and then left him to himself and said—"Now, you shoot." Then he only shot three times. There are many Christian people

who are a great deal too dependent upon their ministers, or upon some elderly Christian who has helped them onward. When he is dead and gone, or when he has moved away, then they do not shoot any more. I want you, dear Friends, not to have to be carried all your days. We do not object to be nursing fathers and nursing mothers to the children, but we want you who are grown up to run alone. What would any father, here, think if he had to carry his boy when he was twenty-six? It is time, I think, that he went on his own two feet. There are some Church members who still want always to have the influence of somebody who is a superintendent to them, just as Elisha was to Joash in his shooting. Do not let it be so with you, but shoot away, God helping you, and keep on shooting till your arrows are all gone!

Another reason why some pause is that they are too soon contented. Joash thought that he had done very well when he had shot three times—and that Elisha would pat him on the back, and say—"How well you have done!" That kind of feeling creeps over many workers for the Lord. They fancy that they have done their share. They have had their time, now they will let somebody else take a turn. And they have done the work so well, too! Ah, yes, the power to do more oozes out by the leakage of contentment with what you have done! We have done nothing well enough to say, "It is finished." Still is there much more land to be possessed and, in the name of God, let us banish from our hearts all contentment with our attainments, or with our services, and let us do much more than we have yet attempted for that dear Lord who has bought us with His precious blood!

Joash, too, I dare say, gave up shooting because he was unbelieving. He could not see how shooting the arrows could affect the Syrians, and he wanted to see. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we do not, any of us, believe enough in God! Believe in God to the uttermost. Thus will you be successful workers and accomplish great things for God. No man knows the possibilities that lie at his feet. It is impossible to measure them—only unbelief can contract them. Remember that even Christ could not do many mighty works in His own country because of the people's unbelief. And nothing stops us from doing work for Him like unbelief in the Ever-Blessed One.

I should not wonder, also, if Joash was too indolent to shoot five or six times. He did not feel in a shooting humor. Now, whenever you do not feel in a humor for prayer, then is the time when you ought to pray twice as much! If you do not feel in a humor to take your class, say to yourself, "You shall do it well, today. I will make you do so, poor lazy flesh of mine!" I heard of a person who, being, weary in walking to the Meeting House, stopped, and said to his legs, "Come, you have carried me a good many miles to the theater—and I will make you carry me to the House of God!" So may we say to ourselves and to one another, "We were active enough when we ran to our amusements and went with the giddy multitude to do evil—and we will be active, now, in the service of our God." None of us will ever got to Heaven on a featherbed. No, it is a marching pilgrimage from this place to the gates of pearl.

Joash also probably had too little zeal. He was not wide awake. He was not thoroughly energized. He did not care for the Glory of God. If he could beat the Syrians three times, that would be quite enough for him. He thought that they would have had enough of it, too, and so he laid down his bow and his arrows. I wonder whether I am speaking to anybody who has just been putting up his bow and arrows, some Brother who has made up his mind that he will retire from the school, or one who has so much to do in the world that he must give up that village station? If so, turn this subject over, and ask yourselves whether you were not sent in here, tonight, on purpose to be told that you ought to have shot five or six times and done much more than you have done. God does speak to men, here, often—and very pointedly, sometimes. Some have written to me to know who told me all about them—when I never heard about them in my life. God does speak to men's consciences by His servants and I put it to every child of God, here, whether this is not a message from the excellent Glory—"Keep on! Keep on as long as there is life in you! Keep on growing in Grace and advancing in the service of Christ."

III. But now, thirdly, and very briefly, notice THE LAMENTABLE RESULT OF THIS PAUSING.

When Joash had shot three times, he paused and, therefore, the blessing paused. Three times he shot, and three times God gave him victory. Do you see what you are doing by pausing? You are stopping up the conduit by which the river of blessing will flow to you! Do not do that—to impoverish yourself must certainly be a needless operation.

You will suffer in consequence, as this king did, for, after the three victories, the rival power came to the front again. You will suffer in many ways if you cease to draw daily supplies of Grace from God, or cease to shoot the arrows against sin.

Others will also suffer with you. All Israel was the worse for Joash leaving the arrows unshot. Your children, your neighbors, your friends—who can tell how many may suffer because you are slack in Grace and in the service of the God of Grace?

Meanwhile, the enemy triumphed. There is joy in Hell when a saint grows idle! There is gladness among devils when we cease to pray, when we become slack in faith and feeble in communion with God.

What was even worse, Jehovah, Himself, was dishonored. The worshippers of false gods triumphed over Israel and the infinitely-glorious Jehovah did not manifest His might as He would otherwise have done. Let us not rob God of His Glory, for that is the worst of robberies, but let us live so that as much glory as is possible may be gotten out of such poor creatures as we are by the ever-blessed God.

Yet again, glorious possibilities were lost. See what glorious possibilities lie before you and do not let them lie there untouched! If you were poor and there was a gold mine in your field at home, which only needed the use of a spade to make you rich, would you not be sorry that you had neglected it so long? Behold, the blessed promises of God are before you!

You children of God may be rich, blessed and happy—will you leave this mine unworked? You Sinners who, as yet have only begun to seek the Savior, seek Him more earnestly! Cling more closely to Christ and you will soon get the blessing. Shall it be your own hand that locks you out of the Kingdom of God? Suffer it not to be so.

IV. I am warned by the time that I must close, but I must say a few words about THE CURE FOR THIS PAUSING.

If we pause in our holy service, or in getting near to God, or in sucking the marrow out of the promises, remember that the enemy will not pause. You cannot make the drink traffic stop. You cannot make the harlotry of London stop its temptations. You cannot make the infidels stop. You cannot make the "Down-Graders" stop. They will all be at it, with all their might, seeking to do mischief against the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. And there is the same choice for you that the Scotch captain put to his men—"Lads," he said, "you see the enemy there? If you don't kill them, they will kill you." If you do not overthrow the powers of evil, the powers of evil will overthrow you! Oh, that God would give us to have no hesitation about our choice, but may we continue, by the power of the Spirit, to shoot the arrows of God's deliverance till Christ, Himself, shall come!

A cure for this stopping lies in the reflection that in other things we are generally eager. If a man engages in business, he is all alive in it. If a man takes to a certain study, he will weary himself that he may understand it. And shall we do the work of the Lord half-heartedly and, in matters of Grace, slur over things and only do as little as we can? The Lord save us from this spirit! A little religion is a very dangerous thing—drink deep if you would come to the sweetness of it. It is bitter at the top—but when you drink it to the very depths—the lees thereof are the choicest cordial for a fainting spirit. God grant us to know the inner core of religion, for that is where the sweetness lies!

And lastly, this question ought to prevent us from ever pausing. Can we ever do enough for our Savior? Did He stop anywhere? Did He cry a halt when the work was half done? Did He not set His face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem? When the scourges fell, He did not turn back and leave us. When the nails were driven into His hands and feet, He did not desert us. When He came to be forsaken of the Father, He did not forsake us, but He went through with His work till He could say, "It is finished." Oh, that we might, each of us, resolve that we would go through with our work, saying, "I have lifted my hand unto the Lord and I cannot go back! May every Christian man and woman say the same! And you who have not yet believed in Christ, may you be brought to believe in Him who died for the guilty! Surrender yourself to Him who died upon the Cross and, having done so, when He looks upon you, and says, "Your sins are forgiven you," look up to Him, and say, "I bless You for that sweet word, my Lord, and now I will serve You all the days of my life." May the Quickening Spirit add the Divine quickening to these feeble words and set you all shooting five or six times, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON. 2KINGS13.

Verses 1, 2. In the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah king of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son, of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom. "Seventeen years"—that is a long time in which to do mischief. Seventeen years of reigning over a people, influencing them all for mischief, turning them aside from God and doing his utmost to erase the name of Jehovah from the hearts of the people. Remember, this Jehoahaz was the son of Jehu who had been called to the front because of the sins of the house of Ahab. Though Jehu was brought forward to be a reformer, yet he and his race were as bad as those who were cast out. What a sad thing this is, when those who are planted where the cumberground tree used to be, become just as barren as the one that has been cut down, or are only fruitful in sour fruit!

See here the force of evil example. It was many years since Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had set up the calves at Bethel and Dan, yet here is another king walking in his footsteps. You cannot tell, if you leave a bad example behind, how your children and your grandchildren to distant generations, may follow your evil footsteps. Bad examples are very vital— they live on age after age—and influence others long after the first transgressor is dead. The thought that we may be ruining those who are yet unborn should keep us back from sin.

Notice also, at the end of the second verse, "He departed not therefrom." There is a final perseverance in sin—some men seem to prove it—"He departed not therefrom." He was warned against it. He was chastened for it, but, "He departed not therefrom." If men hold on in sin, how much more ought the people of God to hold on in righteousness! Whatever happens to you when you are once in the good old way, may it be said of you, "He departed not therefrom." If all other men should turn aside, yet let that be said of you, "He departed not therefrom." But, if you are in the wrong road, may the Lord cause you to turn from it and to turn to Him at once! If you depart not from evil, you must depart from God.

3. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of Hazael, king of Syria, and into the hands of Benhadad, the son of Hazael, all their days. God's people cannot sin without coming under chastisement. Remember this Word of the Lord, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." If you become Church members, and yet live unholy lives, you come under a special discipline, a discipline which I plainly see to be going on in the Church of God even to this day. "For this cause," said Paul of the Church in Corinth, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." No doubt God does send many rods to His rebellious family. He is not one of those fathers who "spare the rod, and spoil the child." Hazael and Benhadad were both wicked men, yet God used them as rods to chastise His sinning people.

4. And Jehoahaz besought the LORD, and the LORD hearkened unto him. Bad as he was, he knew the hand that smote him, and he sought Jehovah. What a wonder it is that God hears the prayers of even wicked men! I have heard it said, sometimes, that, "the prayer of the wicked is an abomination unto God." There is no such passage as that in the Scripture. It is "the sacrifice of the wicked," that is "abomination to the Lord." Even when a wicked man cries unto God and even if his prayer is not a spiritual and acceptable prayer, yet God may hear it in a measure, as he did in this case. Sometimes that hearing of prayer leads men to repentance and they then pray better prayers and receive greater blessings.

4. For He saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them. God cannot bear to see the sorrows of His own people. Even when He, Himself, is laying on the rod, if His child cries, it goes to His heart. Remember what He did to Pharaoh when He heard the sighing and crying of His people in Egypt. There is nothing more powerful with a father's heart than the tears of his child—and God heard the prayers of this bad man because, "He saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them."

5. (And the LORD gave Israel a savior, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as beforetime. The Lord gave them deliverance from the cruel fetters of the Syrians. They had been so tormented, so plundered, so oppressed in every way that God had pity upon them and gave them peace.

6. Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin, but walked therein: and there remained the grove also in Samaria). Israel's repentance was only half-hearted. They repented because they suffered. They repented because of the suffering rather than because of the sin. They went back to the sin after they escaped from the sorrow. Oh, be not so, my Hearer! If God has chastened you on account of sin, let yours be a thorough repentance. Go to God with hatred of your sin, for until you get rid of sin, your being rid of sorrow will be a small blessing.

7. Neither did He leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten-thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing. God helped them and delivered them, but they were brought very, very low. If God's people sin, their deliverance will cost them dearly. Israel was once a great and powerful nation—their armies went forth in vast hosts—but now they have only the remnant of an army.

8. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? They were not worth writing in the Scriptures. We have very slender records concerning Je-hoahaz, but quite enough for such a wicked man.

9-11. And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash, his son, reigned in his stead. In the thirty and seventh year of Joash, king of Judah, began Joash the son of Jehoahaz to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned sixteen years. And he

did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD. One sinner was followed by another! This young man must have seen the mischief that his father's idolatry brought on the people, but he went on in the same evil way. Oh, you sons of godly parents, you ought to follow your fathers' footsteps, for these wicked sons of wicked men followed their fathers' evil example! Oh, that there were an inclination in all the children of the godly to be like their parents, for there is evidently a tendency in the heart of the children of the ungodly to be like their sires!

11. He departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin: but he walked therein. I repeat what I said before, what a mischievous thing is one evil example! When a man makes another sin, the other who sins is guilty and the man who makes him sin is a sharer in his guilt. Here is Jeroboam, dead for years, and yet he keeps on sinning. I may say of him, "He, being dead, yet sins." His sin goes on burning like a fire and surely the punishment continues if the sin continues. As long as souls exist, sin will exist—you cannot stop it. Sin will repeat itself again and again, and multiply in its repetition spreading among thousands, perhaps, yet unborn! Oh, what an evil thing is sin! Prove to me that sin ever ceases to operate and you might give me some thought that the punishment will cease—but that can never be—and, as long as sin continues to poison, God will continue to punish.

12, 13. And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might wherewith he fought against Amaziah, king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? And Joash slept with his fathers; and Jeroboam sat upon his throne: and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. Now, here is a story about this Joash which is preserved to us.

14. Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness of which he died. An old man, probably in his 90th year, he had served his generation well. We read nothing of him for 45 years. He seems to have been in comparative seclusion—perhaps in his old age he had been neglected and forgotten—as many a man of God has been who once stood in the front rank. El-isha has fallen mortally sick, at last, and he is about to go Home.

14. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him. This is one good thing that Joash did. He remembered that it was through Elijah and Elisha that the men of his house, the house of Jehu, had been put upon the throne, and when he heard that Elisha was dying, something like compunction crossed his heart and he "came down unto him."

14. And wept over his face. As Bishop Hall says, he gave him some drops of warm water—and if a cup of cold water, given to a Prophet, shall not be without its reward—so neither shall those tender tears be without their reward.

14. And said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. Elisha must have opened his eyes when he heard those words, for he remembered that those were nearly the last words that he said to Elijah when his master was taken up to Heaven.

Perhaps the king had heard that and, with a kind of delicate thoughtfulness, he applied the words to this grand old man who was now about to die. He was to Israel, chariot and horsemen, for it was by his means that Israel had been delivered.

15, 16. And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, Put your hands upon the bow. And he put his hands upon it; and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands. Not because he could lend much strength, for he was an old man, but because this signified that God would be with the king, that the power which dwelt in the Prophet's God would come through the Prophet's hands to help the king.

17. And he said, Open the window eastward. They had no glass windows in those days, you know, but they threw back the iron bars that made the shutter and opened the window eastward.

17. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD'S deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for you shall strike the Syrians in Aphek, till you have consumed them. It was usual, in the East, when war was proclaimed, to do it by shooting an arrow towards the enemy's country, and this brave old man, soon about to breathe out his life, had strengthened the king in the great weakness of the Israelite state to proclaim war once more against Syria!

18. And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. I suppose, a quiver full.

18. And he said unto the king of Israel, Strike the ground. "Shoot the arrows out of the window and let them strike into the ground and stick there."

18, 19. And he struck three times, and stopped. And the man of God was angry with him. Elisha was angry, but he did not sin. He loved the people and he was grieved to think that the king was so slack and slothful.

19, 20. And said, You should have struck five or six times; then had you struck Syria till you had consumed it: whereas now you shall strike Syria only three times. And Elisha died, and they buried him. God has different ways of taking His people Home. Some go all of a sudden, whirled away, as Elijah was. This Prophet died gently, worn out with age, but there is something very beautiful about his death. A king weeps over his aged face. He has the pleasure, though it was mingled with pain, of helping to deliver his people and, after his death, God bore full witness to him.

20, 21. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulcher of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet. Thus God gave Elisha power, even after death, and certainly set the Divine seal upon his message! It was as great a glory to him to give life to the dead as it was to Elijah to pass to Heaven without dying at all.

22, 23. But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of His Covenant. Ah, that is what always lies at the bottom of God's mercy, "His Covenant." Oh, that grand word, "covenant"! Some think very little of it. Few preach much about it. But this is the very foundation of mercy. This is "the deep that lies under," out of which all the wells of Divine Grace spring up.

23, With Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast He them from His Presence as yet. He would not do it till He was fully driven to it, till provocation upon provocation should wear out His patience,

24, 25. So Hazael king of Syria died; and Benhadad, his son, reigned in his stead. And Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, took again out of the hand of Benhadad, the son of Hazael, the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel. He shot three arrows and now it came to pass that three times did Joash beat Benhadad and recover the cities of Israel. Oh, that he had beaten the king of Syria six times, and set Israel completely free from its enemy!